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**OF THE FIRST VOLUME**

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**OF THE GOSPELS.**

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**MBRIDGE:**

**BY JOHN OWEN.**

**1846.**

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

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FOR the use of those who own the first edition of the volume mentioned on the title-page, I have here given all the important additions made in the second.

A. N.



## NOTE\*

### *On some Opinions and Arguments of Eichhorn, and other German Theologians.*

My object in this work is, not to show in detail the errors of any particular hypothesis, or of any particular writer; but to exhibit the evidence of the proposition, that the Gospels, as we now possess them, are the works of those to whom they have been ascribed. But in order to maintain this proposition satisfactorily, it is necessary to take notice of the assertions and arguments which have been brought against it. Thus I have adverted in what precedes, and shall continue to do so occasionally in what follows, to the positions involved in the hypothesis of Eichhorn, respecting the time when the Gospels first became known and were generally received by Christians, the circumstances that produced their reception, and their previous history.

But if one had no other purpose than to overthrow that hypothesis, it might seem sufficient for him to say, that it is contradicted and set aside by Eichhorn himself. This will appear from what follows.

In the second edition of the first volume of his Introduction to the New Testament, he gives an additional section (p. 684, seqq.) on "The Reception of the Four Gospels for Use in the Church." He begins this section with representations similar to those which have been already quoted

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\* Inserted between the First and Second Parts of the work, after p. 108 of the first edition.

from him.\* Referring to the end of the second century, he states, that "This age" — he does not here say "the Church" — "labored zealously and simultaneously to represent Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as the only authentic biographers of Christ, as if this had not been done before; and an earnest effort was now first made to suppress the other gospels, which in earlier times had been abundantly in use." According to him, these labors and efforts soon attained success. In the time of Origen, "our four Gospels had manifestly triumphed over those before in use, in all the principal divisions of the Christian world; though, from the want of any account of the conflict, we are unable to explain how their success was obtained."

All this is sufficiently in accordance with what he had said before. But after a single sentence, in which he merely quotes Theophilus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Irenæus as vouchers for the general reception and extensive spread of the Gospels, he thus proceeds: —

"The period immediately before the controversies respecting the heresy of the Montanists, and the time of keeping Easter (which commenced shortly after the middle of the second century), that is to say, the interval between the years 150 and 175, appears to be the fittest that can be assigned for the silent introduction of this unanimity of opinion respecting those gospels which merited a preference above others; provided any cause can be pointed out, which might facilitate such a decision. And such a cause existed. The other gospels either did not bear the name of any author, or the individual names of their authors were not specified. On the contrary, our four Gospels were ascribed, two of them to Apostles, Matthew and John, and two to

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\* See before, pp. 11, 12, of the first edition.

apostolic men, worthy of all credit. Who, therefore, would not prefer these to all others? This circumstance, and the simplicity of their contents, recommended them generally; and so forcibly and distinctly, that, without any consultation or agreement, men were led to give them the preference. In the peaceable times of the Church, before a spirit of contradiction had been excited by polemical bitterness, they were thus silently, and in effect generally, preferred. Afterwards, distinguished writers of the Church, each in his own way, defended the choice which had already been made."

It is obvious that this last passage is wholly irreconcilable with what immediately precedes it, and with the statements previously made by Eichhorn as fundamental positions in his hypothesis. In the section just quoted from, he first gives us to understand, that in the time of Origen, that is, in the first half of the third century, our present Gospels had manifestly triumphed over those before in use; but not without a conflict. He had previously said,\* that there are no traces of our present Gospels before the end of the second and the beginning of the third century. About that time, according to him, "the Church," or "the age," first labored to procure their general reception, and to suppress those before in use.

But in the passage last quoted he supposes, that "the interval between the years 150 and 175 is the fittest that can be assigned for the silent introduction of a unanimity of opinion" concerning the four Gospels. All notion of any conflict between them and other gospels is put aside. They were received "silently," "without any consultation or agreement," "in peaceable times, before a spirit of controversy had been excited." The Church did not labor to

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\* See before, p. 11.



procure their reception about the end of the second or the beginning of the third century. On the contrary, the last year assigned for the period during which they were brought into common use is the year 175;—which preceded by about ten years the birth of Origen, during whose time, according to Eichhorn's first statement, they finally triumphed.

We have here an example of the looseness and incoherence of thought which are found in the works of many modern German theologians. Objects are so indistinctly presented, and under such changeable forms, the light is so thrown here and there, that the eye is dazzled and perplexed by the uncertain show and glimmer. The only advantages attending this mode of writing are, that if the reader be dissatisfied with one opinion, he may have the choice of another; and that the author, if driven from one assertion, may take refuge upon another, which he has equally maintained.

But it may be said, that this self-contradiction of Eichhorn should not be insisted upon; that it is a mere oversight, an hallucination. It was not, however, a temporary hallucination. Several years after the appearance of what I have just quoted, that is in 1827, the last year of his life, he published the fourth and fifth volumes of his *Introduction to the New Testament*; and in the fourth volume, without retracting, or referring to, the main positions of his hypothesis, he contradicts them as explicitly as in the passage that has been quoted. He is treating of the collection of the books of the New Testament into two volumes, as he supposes, one containing the Gospels and the other the Epistles.

The heretic Marcion, he says, began to spread his opinions in the West between the years 140 and 150. His gospel, which he carried with him, "was strange" to the

Christians in that part of the world, being different from those in use. "The West had been long in possession of separate histories of Christ. Mark and Luke appear, indeed, to have written theirs for Italy, and those of Matthew and John had each, perhaps, been brought by Christians, on their travels, from the countries for which they were originally designed." "Before the controversy with Marcion, there are traces enough of the existence of the four Gospels separately, but not as collected into one volume." "This collection was probably formed in the commencement of those controversies." "Experience had sufficiently taught the orthodox Church, in the first half of the second century, how necessary it was, on account of the controversies with the heretics, to define the writings which should be regarded as sources of Christianity, and not to leave this to the judgment and choice of individuals." But the selection of these books was not made "through any formal decision of the Church by means of its most distinguished teachers; for this could not have been done privately; but through a silent general agreement, during a period of perfect quiet in the Church, when, men's minds not being excited by other causes, none were inclined to set themselves against the reception of any writing that was strange to them; for, without opposition, and in perfect silence, a series of writings, regarded as the authentic records of Christianity, was unanimously received throughout the Christian world in the East and in the West."\*

The utter inconsistency of this account with the statements in the first volume of Eichhorn's work show with how little consideration the hypothesis there developed was adopted by him, and has been adopted by others. That

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\* *Einleitung*, IV. 22-31.

hypothesis, however, struck its roots deep in the theology of Germany; and many offsets have sprung up from it. There is no other in which propositions tending to weaken men's faith in the genuineness of the Gospels are so elaborately and plausibly embodied. It has essentially affected the speculations of a large class of theologians, particularly among his countrymen. All the doubts and objections on historical grounds, by which the evidence of the genuineness of the Gospels has of late years been assailed, have been connected with it. The question at issue is a very important one. Putting aside all religious considerations, the genuineness of the Gospels is a subject of far more curiosity and interest than that of any work of classical antiquity. But what should we think of a critic who should assail the genuineness of any ancient classical work with such unsteady and inconsistent assertions?

But something still remains to be said. One is placed in an extraordinary position who is arguing against the hypothesis of Eichhorn as invalidating the proof of the genuineness of the Gospels; for Eichhorn himself asserts and defends their genuineness. In the second volume of his *Introduction to the New Testament*, he reasons at length to prove the genuineness of the Gospel of John (pp. 223–254). I have already\* quoted from his first volume one passage, in which he maintains the genuineness of all the four Gospels. But his fourth volume presents other passages more remarkable. In the flux and reflux of opinions on which his hypothesis was borne up, the flow was in his first volume, and the ebb in his fourth.

In the latter volume he treats of the formation of the canon of the New Testament. The early Christians, ac-

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\* See before, p. 86.

according to him, proceeded on the principle of admitting into it no book which was not the work of an Apostle, or of a scholar and companion of the Apostles (p. 42). He gives us to understand, that as regards most of the books which compose it, "criticism, in the perfection to which it has been brought in our age, allies itself to the tradition of the Church, and confirms its judgment upon their genuineness as apostolic writings" (p. 67). After enumerating and remarking upon several which he rejects, he says:—"The remaining writings"—including the Gospels—"which the Church has received into the canon of the New Testament appear, after the strictest critical examination, as genuine documents of the Christian religion" (p. 70). The title of the next section is, "Confirmation of the Tradition concerning the Antiquity of the Writings of the New Testament; or Proofs of their Genuineness." These proofs are derived from their correspondence with the history of the times, and with the character and circumstances of those to whom they are ascribed. And the next section (p. 89) begins with the declaration, that "as the earliest age of Christianity handed down genuine writings to succeeding Christians, so they, during the subsequent period, have preserved these writings uncorrupted."

All this being asserted, it may seem, at first glance, as if it were useless to pursue the argument. One can prove nothing more than what his opponent, if he so regard him, has already contended for. But the genuineness of the Gospels is a subject of too serious importance for its proof to be suffered to rest on the self-contradictions of a German theologian.

INDEED, Eichhorn's assertions of the genuineness of the Gospels have made no impression on the theologians of his

country, or on those who have derived their opinions from them. De Wette (in the second edition of his Commentary on the Gospels, published in 1839) says, that in regard to "the historical criticism of the Gospels" (the meaning of which indefinite words we may deduce from their connection as being "the inquiry how far the history in the Gospels is true or false"), "if it be not too early for the present state of theology, it is too early for the state of my own views and convictions, to solve the whole problem of the criticism of the evangelical history; and I would not fall into the error, committed by most of the opposers of Dr. Strauss, of putting forward over-hasty and immature thoughts." The inquiry into the truth of the evangelic history is primarily connected, he says, with the results of criticism concerning the sources of this history, that is, with the inquiry into the origin and genuineness of the Gospels. But in respect to the first three Gospels, he has attained only to what he calls the *negative* conclusion, that they are founded on tradition; and with regard to the Gospel of John he has come to no confident decision. "It would be tolerably easy," he says, "to solve critically the problem of the Gospel-history, if the apostolical genuineness and credibility of that Gospel might be presupposed." This was done, he says, by the most free-minded critics before Strauss. But De Wette finds himself unable to answer satisfactorily the objections of Strauss and Weisse; he finds no sure foothold on the Gospel of John; and "I must, therefore," he says, "reserve many things which depend on the question of its genuineness till I am better informed hereafter."\*

This appears in a work printed when the author was

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\* Exegetische Handbuch in d. N. T. Vol. I. P. iii. pp. 222, 223.

about sixty years old, after he had spent a great part of his life in the exposition of his opinions concerning religion and Christianity. It is part of a dissertation which concludes a commentary on the Gospels. If one is struck by the modesty of the writer in being unwilling at his age to put forward over-hasty and immature opinions respecting their credibility, yet, on the other hand, there may seem some want of consideration in undertaking to expound the character of our religion without any fixed opinions concerning the truth or falsehood of its history.

His younger contemporary, Strauss, to whom De Wette refers, has settled convictions on the subject. He is satisfied that the Gospels are neither genuine nor credible. He holds, at the same time, determinately, a correct opinion respecting the importance of the question of their genuineness. "Certainly," he says, "it would be of decisive weight to establish the credibility of the Bible-history, were it proved that it was written by eyewitnesses, or even by contemporaries in the neighbourhood of the events."\*

But such, according to him, was not the case; and he proceeds to discuss the historical evidence for the genuineness of the Gospels in a dissertation occupying about ten pages (pp. 73-84) of the more than fifteen hundred which compose his work. Its depth is not disproportioned to its length; for nothing more superficial was ever put forward by a writer of any note as the examination of an important subject. But he considers it unnecessary to attend to the historical evidence, except so far as to show, that it does not interfere with the main purpose of his book, which is to prove directly from the contents of the Gospels that they are neither credible nor genuine.

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\* *Leben Jesu*, i. e. *Life of Jesus*. 3d Ed. Vol. I. p. 73.

In pursuing this purpose, his argument rests on two fundamental propositions. One of these he states explicitly, the other he does not. The first is, that "the chain of finite causes is indissoluble, and that a miracle is impossible."\* As the whole history recorded in the Gospels is miraculous in its essential character, and full of accounts of particular miracles, this principle alone is sufficient to determine the thoroughly fabulous character of those writings. But Strauss, not content with this clear demonstration, has filled a great part of his work with criticisms founded on his second principle, which may be thus explained: If two or more books purport to be written by individuals who were personally, or by direct information, well acquainted with a series of transactions, and if, in professing to relate the same events, the authors of those books differ irreconcilably in some one or more of the circumstances attending them, we may conclude that the events never occurred, that the narratives are fabulous (or "mythical"), and the books not genuine. He labors, therefore, to make it apparent that there are such contradictions in the Gospels.

If a critic begin with putting out of sight the fact, that probably there were never two original histories of any considerable length, concerning the same series of events, which accorded with each other in all their details, his success in discovering objections to the credibility of books subjected to his examination may be proportioned to the rashness of his judgment, to the narrowness of his views, and to his deficiency in the learning and sagacity which might enable him to discern the explanation of what he does not at once understand, to perceive that seeming

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\* *Leben Jesu*, I. 86. Comp. pp. 94-98, 116.

are often not real, or not important, difficulties, and to come to the conviction, that a narrative may be essentially true in which there are errors. Excepting the objections of Strauss to every thing miraculous in the history of our Lord, the striking out of which, as he himself recognizes, leaves but a scanty and uncertain basis of true history, the criticisms in his work are directed rather against the doctrine that the Gospels were written by miraculous inspiration, than against their credibility. But his volumes are not without their value. They present a collection, from various authors, of difficulties in the history contained in the Gospels, to which their expositor should particularly direct his attention, and by the examination of which new light may be thrown on their narrative.

When Strauss's book appeared, German theology was becoming sear and yellow. But, though infidelity was predominant, the new form of infidelity brought forward by him caused a shaking among the dry branches, and reviews, pamphlets, and books were showered upon him, like autumnal leaves. I do not know whether in any of these answers there is a solid confutation of his two fundamental principles.

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IN what precedes in this note, I have brought together statements which stood apart in the original edition of this volume, and connected them with some additional remarks. Upon resuming in the text the argument for the genuineness of the Gospels, we shall—except in relation to the proof afforded by Justin Martyr—have little occasion or opportunity to advert to the errors, or opposite opinions, of other writers. The facts to be stated in evidence are undisputed; and of the reasoning upon those facts every one can judge for himself.



But in order fully to disembarass the subject on which we are about to enter from all objections except those made to the testimony of Justin, there are two topics which it may be well to take notice of here; especially as the argument respecting them lies within a narrow compass, and in treating the first of them we must recur to the conclusion which it has been my purpose to establish in the preceding part of this work.

THE first is the testimony of Papias to the authorship of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. I have already adverted to it,\* and shall produce it at length hereafter. Schleiermacher,† Strauss, and others have attempted to invalidate it.

As there is no question that Papias, *in the first quarter of the second century*, ascribed certain books concerning the history of Christ to Matthew and Mark, the only ground to be taken by those who would reject his testimony, and that, consequently, which has been taken, is, to contend that they were not the same books as the Gospels ascribed to Matthew and Mark *in the last quarter of that century*.

But, as I have said, the argument on this subject lies within a narrow compass. The proposition asserted must involve one of two conjectures. One supposition may be, that the books mentioned by Papias as the works of Matthew and Mark served respectively as the bases of the Gospels shortly after ascribed to them, and were converted into those Gospels by a gradual change. But, if the rea-

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\* See before, pp. 59, 60.

† In a dissertation "Upon the Testimony of Papias concerning our first two Gospels," first published (in 1832) in the journal entitled "Theologische Studien und Kritiken," and reprinted in the second volume of his Works.

soning in the preceding part of this work be valid, it has been made evident, that the Gospels were not formed by any such process, but remain the same works as they were originally composed.

The other supposition may be, that the Gospels ascribed to Matthew and Mark were originally different books from those spoken of by Papias; that they were spurious books (for if it be admitted that they were genuine, all discussion is at an end); but that, in the interval between the first and last quarter of the second century, they were quietly received throughout the Christian community, displacing the genuine works of Matthew and Mark, and causing them to be utterly neglected and forgotten. It is impossible to offer any confutation of this supposition which may render it more incredible than it appears at first view.

It has also been common to slight the testimony of Papias, on the ground that Eusebius says he was a man of very small mind. Referring to this, Schleiermacher says, "I have always been sorry when I have found this testimony dealt with in a certain disparaging manner";—though he himself endeavours to set it aside by the supposition, that Papias spoke of other books than the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. The opinion of Eusebius may have been correct; but those who have adduced it as having any bearing on the case in hand must have neglected to attend to the fact, that weakness of intellect does not enable one to speak of books as existing which are not in existence.

THE other topic to which I have referred is the attestation which Luke himself furnishes to the genuineness of his Gospel in the beginning of his Acts of the Apostles.

That the author of the Acts of the Apostles was the author of the Gospel is admitted. But it is contended that he was not Luke, the companion of St. Paul.

That he was the companion of the Apostle cannot, it is said, be proved from the frequent use of the pronoun "we" in the Acts of the Apostles. That book, it is said, is a compilation, and its author, wherever this pronoun occurs, made use of a narrative written by Timothy; and retained the pronoun as he found it in that document. There is a difficulty in this solution, arising from the first five verses of the twentieth chapter of the Acts, where Timothy appears to be separated from those who are designated by the pronoun "we." But this difficulty is easily got over. The circumstance, that the author of the Acts did retain the pronoun "we," in using the document of Timothy, presents another difficulty. Ulrich, the most elaborate defender of the hypothesis in question,\* acknowledges that no solution of it fully satisfies him; but he considers it "a difficulty of subordinate importance," "a problem which may be left for the exercise of ingenuity."

The positive arguments brought in proof of this supposition I might endeavour to state and answer, if I could persuade myself that I should have any intelligent reader who would not regard me as wasting his time and my own.

"It is difficult," says Strauss,† "to reconcile many of the narratives concerning Paul in the Acts of the Apostles, some vacillating, some marvellous, and others contradictory to what is found in the genuine Epistles of that Apostle, with the supposition that the author of the book was his companion." But Strauss, not insisting upon the supposition, that the book was not written by a companion of Paul, suggests that, if it were so, the author wrote both the

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\* In two dissertations in the "Theologische Studien und Kritiken"; in No. 2, for 1837, and No. 4, for 1840.

† *Leben Jesu*, I. 79, 80.

Acts and his Gospel when he was no longer under the influence of the Apostle, and readily received the marvels with which tradition furnished him.

De Wette says, that it is with him "a settled conviction that the Gospel"—that is, the Gospel of Luke, or the Gospel ascribed to Luke—"was written after the destruction of Jerusalem."\* I will give at length all the arguments which he adduces for this conviction.† "This Gospel," he says, "was composed at a pretty late period; for it supposes the existence of many preceding works on the history of Christ (ch. i. 1.), and the destruction of Jerusalem." His proof that it supposes that the latter event had taken place is this: "Luke," in the prophecy contained in his twenty-first chapter, "disconnects the coming of Christ from the destruction of Jerusalem, and indicates this more distinctly than Matthew." In making the first remark, he may seem to have overlooked the twenty-seventh verse of the chapter referred to: *Then will they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.* But De Wette has not only an explanation for this passage (p. 228 of his Commentary on Matthew); he has still another argument: "Luke also assigns an earlier time to the persecution of the Christians than Matthew."

Matthew, after giving the prediction of our Lord respecting the wars and rumors of wars which were coming, represents him as saying (ch. xxiv. 9): "*Then*"—meaning not "afterwards," but "during that time"—"will they deliver you up to affliction, and put you to death." After a similar prediction of wars and commotions in Luke, follow

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\* Kurze Erklärung der Apostelgeschichte, i. e. Brief Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles, p. 6. 2d Ed.

† In his Introduction to the N. T. (in German), p. 184. 2d Ed.

the words (ch. xxi. 12): "But *before* all these things they will lay hands on you and persecute you." This is an example of the discrepancies which have been sought out in the Gospels. But its bearing on the question when Luke wrote his Gospel is not apparent.

We may be led, therefore, to turn for explanation to De Wette's Commentary \* on the Gospels; and there, on the passage in Luke, is the following note:—"That Luke, in contradiction to Matthew, assigns an earlier date for the persecutions of the Christians, namely, *before* those wars and tumults, betrays the fact that, at the time when he wrote, those, indeed, but not these, had taken place." This is all which he remarks. The reference of "those" and "these" in the last clause is equally ambiguous in the original, as in a translation. But whichever reference may be adopted, it is obvious that the passage is equally without coherent meaning, upon the supposition that Luke wrote after the destruction of Jerusalem. Nor can I conjecture what meaning the writer thought himself to be expressing, or what argument he supposed himself to have found to prove that Luke's Gospel was written after the destruction of Jerusalem.

ONE cannot help feeling some reluctance to reporting such opinions and arguments as I have remarked upon in this note, a reluctance arising partly from their intrinsic character, and partly from an apprehension that there may be readers who will doubt whether they are reported correctly. Should such a doubt arise, it may be removed by a wider acquaintance with a large class of German theologians and critics, who speculate and reason in a similar manner.

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\* Kurze Erklärung d. Evv. d. Lukas u. Marcus.

The books I have quoted will not be read after the present generation has passed away ; and the opinions I have observed upon will soon cease to attract notice, except from the student of the history of theology. Such being the case, the present note may appear an unnecessary digression. But it seemed due to Eichhorn to state the fact, that he was a defender of the genuineness of the Gospels ; and to show that he had very fully contradicted his own hypothesis, that they were introduced into common use by the authority of the Church about the end of the second century. It was desirable, likewise, before entering on the proof that the Gospels have been ascribed to their true authors, to give some account of the exceptions which have been taken to it, especially as it could be done in so few words. And this note, in connection with the First Part of this work, may afford a general view of the present state of the whole controversy against the genuineness of the Gospels. — *Note to 2d Edition*, 1846.

## CHAPTER IV.\*

### CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE DIRECT HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF THE GENUINENESS OF THE GOSPELS.

SUCH as we have seen is the direct historical evidence of the genuineness of the Gospels. The confirmation it receives from the manner in which they were regarded by the earlier heretical sects is still to be considered, and, likewise, all that proof to be derived from the Gospels themselves, which makes it evident, that they could have been written only by individuals bearing the character, and placed in the circumstances, of those to whom they are ascribed. For the present, we confine our attention to the direct historical evidence alone.

IN regard to this, the nature of the case is such, that no evidence of the same character, or of the same weight, can be produced for the genuineness of any other ancient work, which was not, like them, received as an undisputed book of the Christian Scriptures. It is the testimony of a great, widely-spread, and intel-

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\* Following p. 248 of the first edition.

ligent community to a fact about which they had full means of information, and in which they had the deepest interest. It is their testimony to the genuineness of books, the reception of which as authentic would change the whole complexion of their lives; and might, not improbably, put at hazard life itself, or all that they had before considered as rendering life desirable. It is the testimony of Gentiles to their belief of the genuineness and truth of books derived from Jews, — books regarded with strong dislike by a great majority of that nation; three of which were not in common use among those few Jews who, like them, were disciples of Christ; and all of which were so stamped throughout with a Jewish character, as to be likely, at first view, strongly to offend their prejudices and tastes.

BUT the peculiar nature and value of this testimony may be laid out of consideration. The fact alone, that the four Gospels were all received as genuine books, entitled to the highest credit, by the whole community of catholic Christians, dispersed throughout the world, admits of no explanation, except that they had always been so regarded. We have begun by reasoning from their reception during the last



quarter of the second century ; and their reception at that time affords, as we have seen, decisive proof of the estimation in which they must have been held during the whole preceding interval from their first appearance. But, though we may entitle this proof decisive, yet, like all other probable reasoning, it admits of confirmation ; and we have seen the confirmation afforded by the evidence of Justin Martyr, who gives direct proof, that the authority of the Gospels was established among Christians before the middle of the second century. I say before the middle of the second century, — for though this was the precise time when he wrote his first Apology, yet his testimony must be considered as relating to a state of things with which he had been previously conversant. We have next remarked the express and particular testimony of Papias to the genuineness of two of the Gospels, and to the estimation in which they were held by Christians. Then, tracing the stream of evidence back to its very source, we have seen Luke's own attestation to the genuineness of his Gospel. And in connection with this, and with the testimony of Papias, we have attended to the fact, that the acknowledged genuineness of any one of the Gospels must have presented an insuperable barrier to the

reception of any spurious gospel as a work of like authority. The testimony to the genuineness of any one of the Gospels is virtually a testimony to the genuineness of all; and the testimony to their genuineness is a testimony to their reception by all catholic Christians wherever they had become known.

But, in regard to our present argument, it is unimportant what period an objector may fix upon for the general reception of the Gospels as genuine. The later the period assigned for this event, the more obviously incredible does it become that it should have taken place, on the supposition that the Gospels were not received from the beginning in the character which they afterwards bore. The longer the Christian community had existed without a knowledge of the Gospels, or without a belief in their genuineness, the more difficult must it have been to produce this belief, and to cause them to be recognized as books of the highest value and authority. Let us suppose that they were not so regarded till the last quarter of the second century. Their general recognition at that period becomes a most remarkable phenomenon. Some very effective cause or causes must be assigned for it, sufficient to explain how four spurious books, not before known, or known

only to be rejected, should suddenly have obtained universal acceptance throughout the Christian world, as containing the truths fundamental to a Christian's belief. No trace of any causes capable of producing this result can be discovered or imagined. In the nature of things, it is impossible that such causes should have existed. The Christians of that age professed to receive the Gospels as genuine and authentic, on the ground that they had always been so regarded. The truth of this fact is the only explanation which can be given of the universal respect in which they were then held.

It appears, therefore, that the evidence of the genuineness of the Gospels is of a very different character from what we are able to produce for the genuineness of any ancient classical work. Very few readers, I presume, could at once recollect and state the grounds on which we believe the Epistles to Atticus to have been written by Cicero, or the History of the Peloponnesian War by Thucydides. But should any writer undertake to impugn the genuineness of these, or of many other ancient works that might be named, in the manner in which attempts have been made to weaken the historical argument for the genuineness of the Gospels,

he would hardly succeed even in gaining a dis-creditable notoriety.

BUT there are objections derived from the Gospels themselves, which are relied upon as doing away the whole force of the historical argument. It is urged, that the contents of one Gospel are irreconcilable with those of another, and, therefore, that the Gospels could not be the works of well-informed narrators. By the opponents of Christianity, the errors of theologians are commonly confounded with the truths of our religion; and, so far as the objection just mentioned rests on any tenable grounds, it bears, not against the authenticity and genuineness of the Gospels, but against the doctrine that they were written by miraculous inspiration. It would be an extraordinary fact, if these books presented on their face decisive objections to their own credibility which had been overlooked for eighteen centuries by intelligent Christians engaged in their study. To any one, indeed, who is capable of a just apprehension of the proof of the genuineness of the Gospels, afforded by their intrinsic character, nothing can appear more idle than such an attempt to prove, from their contents, that they

could not have been written by the authors to whom they are ascribed.

BUT there is another objection drawn from the essential character of the Gospels, which is, in fact, the root, and furnishes the sap and strength, of all others which have been urged against them. They contain the history of a miraculous dispensation ; and a miracle, it is asserted, is impossible.

This objection, if it can be maintained, is final, not merely in regard to the truth of the Gospels, and the truth of Christianity, but in regard to the truth of all religion.

The assertion, that a miracle is impossible, and, consequently, that such a miraculous intervention of the Deity as Christianity supposes is impossible, must rest for support solely on the doctrine, that there is no God ; but that the universe has been formed and is controlled by physical powers essential to its elementary principles, which, always remaining the same, must always produce their effects uniformly according to their necessary laws of action. This being so, a miracle, which would be a change in these necessary laws, is, of course, impossible.

But when we refer the powers operating throughout the universe to one Being, as the

source of all power, and ascribe to this Being intelligence, design, and benevolence, that is, when we recognize the truth, that there is a God, it becomes the extravagance of presumptuous folly to pretend, that we may be assured, that this Being can or will act in no other way than according to what we call the laws of nature; that he has no ability, or can have no purpose, to manifest himself to his creatures by any display of his power and goodness which they have not before witnessed, or do not ordinarily witness.

The assertion, therefore, that a miracle is impossible, can be maintained by no coherent reasoning, which does not assume for its basis, that all religion is false; that its fundamental doctrine, that there is a God, is untrue. The controversy respecting it is not between Christianity and atheism; it is between religion, in any form in which it may appear, and atheism.

One may, indeed, give the name of God to the physical powers operating throughout the universe, considered collectively, or to some abstraction, as the moral law of the universe, for example, or to some conception still more unsubstantial and unintelligible, and thus contend that he does not deny the existence of God. But there is but one view which an

honest man can take of the deception which in this and other similar cases has been attempted through a gross abuse of words, by which their true meaning is razed out, and a false meaning forced upon them. In contending with irreligion, we have a right to demand that we shall not be mocked with the language of religion.

BUT the fact has been overlooked, that, supposing the proposition to be admitted, that a miraculous intervention of the Deity is impossible, it would have no bearing on our immediate subject. No inference could be drawn from it to show that the Gospels were not written by those to whom they are ascribed.

The first disciples of our Lord, the first preachers of his religion, whether their account was true or false, taught that he was a messenger from God, whose authority was continually attested by displays of divine power, superseding the common laws of nature. They represented Christianity only under the character of a dispensation wholly miraculous. It has come down to us bearing this character from the first accounts we have of its annunciation,—from the time when St. Paul wrote those Epistles, the genuineness of which cannot be questioned. The fact that Christianity is a miraculous dis-

pensation was the basis of his whole teaching, and equally of the teaching of the other Apostles. It cannot be pretended, that any indication is to be found of its having been presented to men under another character. The effects which followed its preaching are such as could have resulted only from such a conception of it. The hypothesis, therefore,—for such an hypothesis has actually been put forward,\*—that this was not the original character of Christianity,—that its first preachers did not announce it as a miraculous dispensation, but that some time during the lives of the Apostles, or immediately after, it assumed this character,—can be regarded only as one of the most extraordinary of those exhibitions of human folly which have lately been given to the world as speculations concerning our religion. There is no doubt, that the Apostles and their companions represented Christ as a messenger from God, whose divine authority was attested throughout his ministry by miracles. It can, therefore, be no objection to the genuineness of the Gospels, that such is the representation to be found in them. Whether true or false, it is the only representation that

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\* By Strauss, in his *Leben Jesu* (*Life of Jesus*).



was to be expected in histories of Jesus given by Apostles and their companions.

THE Gospels, then, contain that view of Christianity which was presented by its first preachers. We have in these books that solemn attestation which was borne by them, and was confirmed by circumstances that exclude all doubt of its truth, to facts in the ministry and character of Christ which evince his divine mission. And to this nothing is objected but a speculation, which supposes that all religion must be false.

IN regard to men's belief in Christianity, and their apprehension of its character, the present is an age of transition. We are leaving behind us the errors and superstitions of former days, with all their deplorable consequences, — the domination of a priesthood, tyranny over reason, persecution, false conceptions of morality by which its sanctions were often wholly perverted, and that disgust toward Christianity which the deformed image bearing its name, and set up for idol-worship, was so fitted to produce. But, through a revulsion of feeling, occasioned by this state of things, many of the clergy, particularly in England, — one is reluctant to say

many priests, though this is a title which they readily assume,—have turned about, and are travelling back into the dark region of implicit faith, Jesuitical morality, and religious formalities, absurdities, and crimes. On the other hand, there is a multitude of speculatists, who, in the abandonment of religious error, have abandoned religion itself, and whose only substitute-for it, if they have any, is an unsubstantial spectre which they have decorated with its titles. Meanwhile, very many enlightened men, who have been repelled from the study of Christianity by the imbecility or folly of those who have assumed to be its privileged expositors and defenders, regard it, at best, only with a certain degree of respect, as being, perhaps, a noble system, if properly understood, and one the belief of which, even under the forms that it has been made to assume, is, at all events, useful to the community:—*Magnifica quidem res et salutaris, si modo est ulla.*

In order that we may pass from this state of things to a better, it is necessary that the intellect of men should be awakened and brought to exercise itself on the most important subject that can be presented to its examination. The result would be a rational and firm faith in Christianity, with all the consequences that must

flow from such a faith. The convictions which rest on reason are of very different efficacy from the impressions produced through prejudice, imagination, or passion. The latter may lead to great evil; the former can produce only good. There is a sense of reality attending the convictions of reason, which makes it impossible that they should not penetrate into the character. Let any one, in the best exercise of his understanding, be persuaded that the history of Jesus Christ is true, that the miracle of his mission from God, which belongs to the order of events lying beyond the sphere of this world, and concerning the whole of man's existence, is as real as those facts which take place in this world, conformably to the narrow circle of its laws with which we are familiar, and he has become intellectually, and can hardly fail to become morally, a new being. In recognizing that fact, he recognizes his relation to God, or rather, if I may so speak, God's relation to him. Life assumes another character. It is not a short period of existence in which we are to confine our views and desires to what may be attained within its limits. It is a state of preparation for a life to come, which will continue into an infinity where the eye of the mind is wholly incapable of following its course. Viewed

in the broad light which thus pours in upon us, their false coloring disappears from the objects of passion, and we perceive that there is nothing permanently good, but what tends to the moral and intellectual progress of the soul, and nothing to be dreaded as essentially evil, but what tends to impede it.

## NOTE \*

### *On Epiphanius's Account of the Gospel used by the Ebionites.*

THE passages that have been preserved of the Gospel of the Hebrews, so called, in which some one or more of its copies varied from the Gospel of Matthew, may be found in the Codex Apocryphus N. T. of Fabricius, or in Jones on the Canon.

But from the passages that have been regarded as variations or additions in the Gospel of the Hebrews, should, I believe, be excepted all those given on the authority of Epiphanius. His account of the contents of the gospel used by the Ebionites is, I am persuaded, wholly undeserving of credit. The opposite opinion has been commonly held; and the Gospel of the Ebionites has been spoken of as a distinct form of the Gospel of the Hebrews. Not having sufficiently attended to the subject, I wrote, in the first edition of this work, on the presumption of the truth of this opinion. But the grounds on which it is to be rejected may appear from what follows.

Epiphanius, in a passage following one already quoted from him above (in which he asserts that the Ebionites "used the Gospel of Matthew alone in the original Hebrew"), says (Opp. I. 137), that the Gospel of Matthew used by the Ebionites was "not complete, but corrupted and curtailed," and proceeds to give the following example. In this Gospel, he says, it is written :—

*"There was a certain man, Jesus by name, about thirty years old, who made choice of us. And coming to Cupernaum, he entered the house of Simon, surnamed Peter; and, opening his mouth, he said, As I was passing along the lake of Tiberias, I chose John and James, sons of Zebedee, and Simon, and Andrew, and Thaddeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot,—and thee, Matthew, I called, who wert sitting at the custom-house, and thou didst follow me. You, then, I will should be twelve Apostles to testify to Israel.*

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\* Inserted in the place of note †, p. xlix of the first Edition.

*“And John was baptizing. And the Pharisees went to him and were baptized, and all Jerusalem. And John had a garment of camel’s-hair, and a leathern girdle round his loins; and his food, this gospel says, was wild honey, the taste of which was that of the manna, like a sweet cake with oil.”*

The last words, *“like a sweet cake with oil,”* are a description of the taste of the manna, borrowed, inaccurately, from the renderings of the Septuagint, Exodus xvi. 31, and Numbers xi. 8.

This passage is characterized by such weakness and folly as to show, that it never could have made part of a book regarded as the authentic history of our Lord by any body of Christians, or by any body of men possessed of common intelligence. It exhibits those characteristics so strongly throughout, that it scarcely deserves to be particularly remarked, that eight individuals are called twelve Apostles; or that such care is taken to inform the reader concerning the taste of wild honey, by comparing it to that of the manna.

But should we reason on the supposition, that the passage was found in some history of Christ, it is evident, that, such being the case, it must have formed its commencement. It is not easy to perceive how this fact can be made clearer than it is at first view, or what doubt may arise concerning it which it is necessary to remove. But the absurdity of supposing the passage to occupy any other place may, perhaps, be brought more home to the mind by imagining it to be inserted, somewhere after the beginning, in any one of the four Gospels, or in any other gospel that may be conceived of.

But Epiphanius, immediately after quoting this passage, goes on to say (p. 138), *“Their gospel”* (the Gospel of the Ebionites) *“begins thus:—*

*“In the days of Herod, king of Judea, John came baptizing the baptism of repentance in the river Jordan; being said to be of the family of Aaron the priest, the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth; and all went to him.”*

Epiphanius thus assigns two beginnings to his pretended gospel. No credit can be given to the account of a writer who sets out with a false statement in the form of so portentous a blunder. The two passages which he pretends to quote could not have coëxisted in the same book.

In the passage last given, John is said to have baptized in the reign of Herod, king of Judea, that is of Herod the Great (so called); and these words are just afterwards alleged by Epiphanius again. But

this Herod died more than thirty years before John's appearance. We cannot believe that so gross an error had a permanent place in a gospel received as a work of authority by Jewish Christians.

After what has been said, it is not necessary to bring into view all the other reasons which make it evident that the account given by Epiphanius of the Gospel of the Ebionites is a mere fabrication. But there are two or three other points which it may be worth while to attend to.

This Hebrew Gospel of Matthew, "corrupted and curtailed," was, as he affirms (p. 138), the same gospel which was used by the Carpocratians. But the Carpocratians, of whom I have elsewhere spoken (Part III. Ch. iv.), were a Gentile sect, widely differing from the Ebionites in their doctrines. Whatever conceptions they may have borrowed from Christianity, they certainly did not make use of a Hebrew Gospel. Any gospel which they were acquainted with must have been in Greek.

But, though there is no question that the Ebionites used a Hebrew gospel, yet the remarks of Epiphanius on one passage which he professes to quote from it (p. 146), imply the extraordinary oversight of regarding it as a Greek gospel. The Ebionites, he says, refrained from animal food. But our Saviour, he objects, partook of the Passover. And he pretends (p. 146), that, to meet this difficulty, the Ebionites had altered the words of Jesus, *I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you*, into an interrogation, *Have I earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you?* This change would be effected in Greek by prefixing the Greek particle  $\mu\acute{\iota}$  to the sentence; and Epiphanius asks, "Is not their fraud to be easily detected from what follows, which proclaims that the *mu* (the letter  $\mu$ ) and the *eta* ( $\eta$ ) have been added?"

It appears, then, that he was commenting on a Greek text, real or imaginary. The words of our Lord which he quotes are not in Matthew, but in Luke (xxii. 15); and, to reduce all the statements of Epiphanius into one coherent charge, it would amount to this, that the Ebionites introduced a passage in Greek from the Gospel of Luke into the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew, for the sake of corrupting the reading, though they could gain no advantage by it.

I will remark on one other passage, the only one remaining of those which Epiphanius professes to quote from the Gospel of the Ebionites, excepting an account of our Lord's baptism, which I have omitted to notice, because it is not particularly important in regard to our present purpose.

By the fathers before and after Epiphanius, the Jewish Christians, generally, are represented as distinguished by their attachment to the Jewish Law, — Origen alone remarking, that some of them “had relinquished their ancient customs under the pretext of expositions and allegories.” The same character is also given of them by Epiphanius. “The Nazarenes,” he says, after his fashion (p. 122), “are in all things Jews, and nothing else.” “The Ebionites,” he says (p. 125), “hold the doctrine of the Nazarenes.” “Ebion adhered to the Jewish Law as to keeping the Sabbath, and circumcision, and all other things which are observed by Jews and Samaritans.” (p. 126.) The Ebionites, he affirms, calumniated St. Paul, because “he wrote against circumcision, and the Sabbath, and the Law.” (p. 140.)

Yet on the very page on which this last assertion stands, he abruptly introduces the declaration, that in the Gospel of the Ebionites Christ was represented as saying : —

*“I have come to abolish sacrifices, and unless ye cease from offering sacrifices, wrath will not cease to be upon you.”*

He makes this astonishing statement without any attempt to reconcile it with the well-known character of the Ebionites, or with his own account of them.

Epiphanius could not have afforded plainer indications than he has done, that the account given by him of his pretended Gospel of the Ebionites is utterly undeserving of credit. What may have suggested to him the fabrication, or what may have been his motive for putting it forth, must be a mere matter of conjecture. But it is evident that the account is to be thrown out of consideration in an inquiry respecting the use of the Hebrew original of Matthew by the Jewish Christians ; and that no argument on any subject is valid which rests on the supposition of its truth. — *Note to 2d Edition, 1846.*



IN the second edition, in connection with the mention of supposed interpolations in the Gospel of Matthew, I have referred to the words ascribed to our Lord in Matthew xii. 40; and have given the following note upon them, the place of which would be on p. lxix, of the first edition.

## NOTE

### *On Matthew xii. 40.*

I do not speak of the passage in the text, because I do not believe it to be an interpolation. I give the words in brackets, with those preceding:—

“A wicked and apostate race would have a sign; but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah the Prophet. [For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.]”

The words of our Lord are thus reported by Luke, Ch. xi. 29, 30:—

“This is a wicked race. It would have a sign; but no sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah. For such a sign as Jonah was to the Ninevites will the Son of Man be to this generation.”

If we regard what is given by Luke as a correct report of what was said by Jesus, we may suppose that the explanation of the sign of Jonah, by a comparison of his being three days and three nights in the belly of a fish with our Lord's being three days and three nights in a tomb, which is found in Matthew but not in Luke, was introduced into our Lord's discourse during the time that it was preserved by oral tradition. His own brief words leaving his meaning undefined, they were understood by some as referring to the extraordinary marvel related in the story of Jonah; and, being so understood, this explanation became connected with them. There seems to be no reason for supposing that it was inserted in Matthew's Gospel by any other than the Evangelist himself.

But it cannot readily be believed that our Lord would have represented his being three days and three nights in the heart of the earth as the only sign of his divine mission to be given to the Jews. This would have been admitting what they had just implied, that no sign of his divine mission had already been given them.

Nor, if we regard as fabulous the story that Jonah remained alive for three days and three nights in a fish by which he had been swallowed, is it credible that our Lord would have referred to a fiction of this sort in the manner represented ; — especially, as it does not appear from the narrative concerning Jonah that the supposed miracle was any sign to the Ninevites, or was even known to them.

It may be added, that our Lord is made to say, that he would be three days and three nights in the tomb. He was, in fact, laid in the tomb on the night of Friday, probably late at night, and rose before the dawn of Sunday morning ; — and no use of language can be produced which may justify the calling of such a period of time three days and three nights. Its being so called can, I think, be accounted for only by the loose manner in which the Jews were wont to accommodate together passages of the Old Testament, and events of which they regarded those passages as descriptive, prophetic, or typical. Of this it is not a remarkable example.

The meaning of the words of Jesus as reported by Luke, and also by Matthew, with the omission of those under consideration, may be thus explained : —

Jesus was surrounded by men full of bigotry, evil passions, and mortal hatred toward himself, — men who were resisting the strongest evidences of his divine mission, ascribing his miracles to the agency of Satan, and demanding in mockery some sign of his divine mission, some manifestation of God's power in attestation of it, as if the most striking attestations of it had not been already given. His view turned to that destruction of their nation which was impending over the Jews, as the punishment of their rejection of him. No sign, he says, will be given to this wicked and apostate race, no manifestation of God's power will be made to them which they will believe and feel to be such, except a prophet of destruction such as Jonah was to the Ninevites, whose warnings — to pursue the train of thought which was in the mind of our Lord — will be disregarded, and whose predictions of ruin will be accomplished.

Thus he immediately subjoins : — “The men of Nineveh will rise up before the judgment-seat with this race and condemn it ; for they

reformed upon the preaching of Jonah ; and lo ! one greater than Jonah is here."

However fabulous may be the story of Jonah, there was nothing unsuitable to our Lord's character in thus using it. Speakers and writers of every age and country have recurred to well-known works of fiction as readily as to authentic history for analogies and exemplifications fitted to affect the imaginations of their hearers or readers. It would be folly to suppose, that, in doing so, they meant to vouch for the truth of the books which they have thus quoted. It is only in the reasonings of divines, that these facts have been overlooked, — in those reasonings in which our Lord and the writers of the New Testament have been considered as giving their authority for the truth and for the genuineness of all books referred to or quoted by them.

LUKE, CHAPTER IX. VERSES 55, 56.\*

WHEN our Lord and his disciples were refused hospitality by the Samaritans of a certain village, which was an act of peculiar disrespect according to the notions of that age and country, James and John, in common, doubtless, with the other disciples, were indignant at such treatment. They recollected what, according to the Jewish history, had been the dealings of prophets of old with those who offended them; they were disposed on this as on other occasions to take the lead among the disciples, and, under the excitement of the moment, they addressed Jesus with the question, — “Master, shall we call down fire from heaven and destroy them? — as Elijah did.

“But he turned and rebuked them; [and said, Ye know not of what spirit ye are. For the Son of Man came not to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.] And they went to another village.”

We can conceive of no words more appropriate to the occasion, more suitable to the character of our Lord, or better fitted to repress and correct the wrong feelings of his disciples. They conveyed a reproof full of instruction, expressed at once in the mildest and the most effectual form.

One who is not a critical student of the New Testament may therefore be surprised to learn, that these words were, probably, not in the Gospel of Luke as written by him. They are wanting in a large majority of the oldest and most important manuscripts.

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\* Inserted between p. lxxvii. and p. lxxix. of the first edition.

The omission of a passage which was part of the original text of a work must be the result either of accident or of design. No accident can be supposed which would lead to the concurrent omission of a passage in many manuscripts, which, like those in the present case, were written independently of one another, that is, of which one was not copied from another. There is only one class of accidents of omission which admits of any particular explanation, such as may justify us in supposing the possibility that an accident of this class, affecting a particular passage, might occur in a few unconnected copies. The omissions referred to are those which proceed from the circumstance, that one clause ends with the same word or the same series of syllables as another following it, so that the eye of a transcriber may glance from the former to the latter ending, and omit the intervening words;—omissions in consequence of an *homoioteleuton* (that is, “like ending”), as they are technically called. But this cause of omission does not exist in the passage before us.

If, then, the words ascribed to Jesus originally made a part of Luke’s Gospel, they must have been omitted by design; and this supposition has been resorted to. It has been suggested that they were struck out by catholic Christians, that the Marcionites might not use them in defence of their opinions.\*

As I have elsewhere (in Part III. of this work) more fully explained, the Marcionites, in common with the other Gnostics, regarded Judaism as a very imperfect dispensation, with which Christianity in many respects stood in contrast; they conceived of it as proceeding not from the true God, but from an inferior god, who had fashioned this material world; and they believed that the Apostles gen-

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\* “Orthodoxī hęc videntur delevisse, ne Marcionitę haberent quo se tuerentur.”—Wetstein, ad locum.

erally, through their Jewish prejudices, did not fully comprehend the character of Christianity. In the passage before us, our Lord is represented as saying to two of the principal Apostles,—“Ye know not of what spirit ye are”; that is, as I doubt not that the words should be understood, “Ye know not the spirit of my religion”; and in his own conduct he presents the spirit of Christianity in contrast with what was conceived to be the spirit of Judaism, as exemplified in the story concerning Elijah.\* The passage, therefore, is one which the Marcionites might naturally have thought to be very much to their purpose.

But we cannot thus account for its omission. Nor can we adopt any other supposition, which is designed to explain its absence from so many copies, on the ground of there being something obnoxious in its character.

There is no evidence, and no probability, that transcribers among catholic Christians were accustomed to omit passages through the influence of any theological prejudice, or because they might seem to them to present a difficulty, of whatever kind that might be. If such had been the fact, there must have been abundant evidence of it in the present state of the authorities for settling the text of the New Testament; but such evidence does not exist. Catholic Christians, to say nothing of their reverence for the Scriptures, were not so deficient in honesty and in good sense as to adopt or countenance such a course. In regard to the passage before us, every transcriber must have shrunk from thus dealing with the words of Jesus himself. Without doubt, likewise, the generality of those engaged in the transcription and sale of books pursued their business as a trade, and troubled themselves little about the bearing of particular passages.

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\* The story is told in 2 Kings, Ch. i.

But should we admit that some few transcribers were so alarmed at the use which the Marcionites might make of the passage, that, though they could not expunge it from the copies of the Marcionites, they struck it out of their own, or that they were, for any other reason, so scandalized at the words of our Lord, that they resolved not to be concerned in preserving them, yet their misconduct could affect only the copies which they transcribed. If we suppose the omission to have been made after the controversy with the Marcionites had commenced, it could not have affected many thousands of copies already spread over the world, nor those copies which might be made by more trustworthy transcribers; nor could it have counteracted the constant tendency there would have been to fill up the gap which had been left,—the tendency among transcribers, of which I have before spoken, to insert and not to omit. We cannot, therefore, account for the absence of the passage from so many copies on the ground of intentional omission.

BUT it is further to be observed, that the Marcionites made no use of the words of our Lord, though apparently so much to their purpose. If they had done so, we should have evidence of the fact in the writings of their opponents, particularly of Tertullian. But nothing to that effect appears. This is the more remarkable, as Tertullian in his long work against Marcion twice notices the use which the Marcionites made of the narrative, by contrasting the conduct of Jesus and Elijah,\* but refers to no appeal made by them to the words of Jesus. Had those words been generally recognized as genuine in the time of the earlier Marcionites, they could hardly have failed to use them.

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\* *Advers. Marcion. Lib. IV. c. 23. p. 438. Ib. c. 29. p. 446.*

IN discussing the question, whether a passage omitted in certain manuscripts should or should not be considered as a part of the original text, it has not been uncommon to array on one side the authorities which recognize it as genuine, and on the other side those which do not. The intrinsic value of one class of authorities, considered in reference to their general character, is then weighed against that of the other class, and the passage is judged to be genuine or not, according as either class preponderates ;—except, indeed, that a zeal for defending the Received Text often causes the critic to lay a heavy hand upon the scale in which are placed the authorities for retaining it. But this mode of reasoning is wholly fallacious. If a passage be genuine, we may reasonably expect to find it, not in a majority of the copies of the work to which it belongs, but in all the copies, except so far as in particular cases a satisfactory reason may be assigned for its omission. If there be any copy in which it is not found, this is a fact to be accounted for. An interpolation may be extant in a majority of copies. It may have been originally inserted inconsiderately or fraudulently. It may by mistake have been taken from the margin into the text,—a mistake of so very frequent occurrence, that I am obliged often to refer to it.\* Having been once inserted, its spread

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\* A marginal note has crept into the text, says Porson in his Letters to Travis (pp. 149, 150), “not merely in hundreds or thousands, but in millions of places. *Naturâ*, says Daillé, *ita comparatum est, ut auctorum probatorum libros plerique omnes amplius quam breves malint; verentes scilicet, ne quid sibi desit, quod auctoris vel sit vel esse dicatur*. To the same purpose Bengelius, *Non facile pro superfluo aliquid hodie habent complures docti viri* (he might have added, *omnesque indocti*), *eâdemque mente plerique quondam librarii fuere*. From this known propensity of transcribers to turn every thing into text which they found written in the margin of their MSS. or between the lines, so many interpolations have proceeded, that at present the surest canon of criticism is, *Præferatur lectio brevior*.”



from one copy to many is easily explained by the uncritical habits of transcribers, and their disposition to retain whatever they found given as a part of the text before them. The noted passage interpolated in the Jewish Antiquities of Josephus, in which mention is made of Jesus, is not only quoted by a series of Christian fathers from Eusebius downward, but is extant at the present day in all the manuscripts of that work. It appears, therefore, that the genuineness of a passage is not established by its being found in a majority of the most important copies of the work of which it may be supposed to be a part. To satisfy the conditions of proof required, it should be found in all; except (as I have said) a sufficient and probable cause can be assigned for its absence.

These are general principles of criticism, to be kept in view in regard to the passage before us, and others which we are about to consider. The present passage, indeed, is *not* found in a majority of the most important manuscripts, but it is found in a large majority of the manuscripts of Luke's Gospel, taken indiscriminately, and in many of the versions.

Its omission in the copies in which it is not found cannot, as we have seen, be accounted for as having been caused either by accident or by design. We must conclude, therefore, that it did not make a part of the original text of Luke's Gospel.

But, on the other hand, the words carry with them strong intrinsic proof that they were spoken by Jesus. Nor can we imagine any reason why, if not uttered by him, they should have been invented and ascribed to him.

In this state of the case, the only solution of the appearances that present themselves seems to be, that the words ascribed to our Lord were spoken by him, that they were preserved in the memories of those who heard him, and

communicated by them to others, and that, not having been recorded by Luke, they were first written in the margin, and then introduced into the text of his Gospel.

But the appearances are such, that, this general explanation being given, we must enter further into particulars. The Cambridge manuscript and some other authorities omit only the last words ascribed to our Lord, and preserve the first, namely, "*Ye know not of what spirit ye are.*" And some manuscripts, including the Vatican and the Codex Stephani  $\eta$ , which omit all our Lord's words, omit also the words, "*As Elijah did.*" It may seem, therefore, that the account of the words of our Lord and his disciples was not introduced in a complete form at once; but that the text owes its present state to marginal additions made at three different times; first, the words, "*As Elijah did,*" being written down, as these are wanting in the smallest number of manuscripts, then those first spoken by our Lord, and then his remaining words.

IN the first edition, on page cvi, I have quoted the verses, Mark ii. 4 and Luke v. 19. In the second edition, I have altered the rendering of these verses, so that they stand as given below, accompanied with two explanatory notes; the first referring to an expression of Luke, and the second to the accounts of both the Evangelists.

*Mark ii. 4. Luke v. 19.*

Mark ii. 4. And not being able to get near him on account of the crowd, they removed a part of the awning over where he was, and, breaking through, let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.†

Luke v. 19. And not finding any way to carry him in, on account of the crowd, they got on the house-top, and lowered him down from the roof,\* with his bed, into the midst, before Jesus.†

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\* *Διὰ τῶν κεράμων*,—which is equivalent to the Latin *per tegulas*, and does not, any more than the Latin words, signify “through the tiling,” or “through the roof.” To render verbally, we should say “by way of the roof,” but the meaning is here more intelligibly expressed by saying “from the roof.”—See Wetstein’s N. T. Vol. I. pp. 558, 559, and Kypke’s *Observationes Sacræ*, I. 230. See also, in relation both to this and the following note, Shaw’s *Travels*, pp. 273–280.

† To understand the accounts of Mark and Luke, we must attend to the following considerations.

Jesus was in the house in which he usually resided when in Capernaum, and which was probably owned by Peter. This, doubtless, was a small house,—the habitation of one who was not wealthy.

The more common notion has been, that Jesus was in an upper

chamber of this house ; and that the roof over the chamber in which he was, was broken through. But this, I think, is an error.

There are two objections to this conception of the circumstances of the case, either of which seems decisive. One is, that when such a crowd was pressing to hear him, our Lord would not have retired to an upper chamber of a small house that he might there address those only who could gain admission. The other is, that the breaking through of a roof over his head, with the inconvenience and disorder that it must have occasioned, would have been an act of such gross indecorum as is not to be imagined.

In essential conformity, then, with an explanation given by Dr. Shaw (in his *Travels*, as before referred to), we are, I suppose, to conceive of Jesus as in the inner court of the house, the place where, in the houses of Judea and the neighbouring countries, a large company was always received. The bearers of the paralytic, not being able to make their way to him through the crowd, ascended to the flat, terraced roof of the house, passing up stairs, which rose either from the porch or just by the entrance of the court, or perhaps passing over the roof of a neighbouring house ; and from the roof where they were, they lowered the sick man down into the court.

There is no difficulty in thus understanding the account of Luke. Mark's account requires a little further explanation. In this account, the word *στέγη*, rendered "roof" in the Common Version, denotes, I conceive, conformably to common uses of it, the awning stretched over the court, as an awning often was. This the bearers of the sick man partially removed ; but having done so, the parapet, which, according to the usual mode of building, ran along the roof over the court, probably about breast-high, as Shaw says it is at the present day, presented an obstacle to their purpose. Over the parapet they would not undertake to lift their burden ; for this could not have been done with convenience or safety. They accordingly made an opening through it, which Mark expresses by the word *ἔκρούσαντες*, "breaking through," without mentioning what was broken through.

This is one instance, among many, of the imperfect style of narration found in the Evangelists. They did not advert to the fact, that what was clear to their own minds might not be equally clear to the minds of readers living many centuries after they wrote. They thought only of those who were familiar with the scenes and circumstances to which their narratives related.

HAVING altered above the rendering which was conformed to the more common usage, it seemed proper to explain my reason; otherwise, I should have been unwilling to withdraw my main argument before us. — *Note to 2d Edition*

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## ERRATUM

p. 43, note, for 'p. lxxvii,'

rendering given in the first edition,  
more common conception of the pas-  
sain my reasons for doing so. Other-  
willing to withdraw attention from the  
*te to 2d Edition.*

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R R A T U M .

p. lxxvii,' read 'p. lxxviii.'